

## The Cinema and Literature of Israeli Religious Communities

Over the past two decades there has been a growing phenomenon of artists identified with religious communities in Israel. They work in a variety of art forms, including cinema, music, prose, poetry, dance, theatre, and plastic art. This phenomenon is interesting not only because it reveals changes unfolding within Israeli religious communities, but also because it reflects serves changes in the relationship between religion and nationalism. Also, of great interest are the changing perceptions of gender outside of the religious community. The course deals with literary and cinematic texts that were created by those identified with religious communities in Israel and those who live on the borderline between religious and secular. Through our discussion of a number of critical themes in Israeli religious discourse (sexuality, gender, relations with the secular world, etc.), we will also consider the borders of Israeli religious discourse, as well as the alternative and critical voices both within and outside the community.

### **Course requirements**

- Attendance
- Written commentary on the weekly readings
- Final paper

## Course program

Lesson 1: Introduction. Creation in Israeli religious communities and discourse boundaries

Indursky, Yehonatan. *Driver*. Israel, Sam Spiegel Film School, 2009 (film).

Kosman, Admiel. *Various Poems*. [My selection]

Lesson 2: Nationalism, secularization and Hebrew Literature

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso, 1991.

Biale, David. "God's Language and the Making of Secular Jewish Culture." In *Jewish Secularity: the Search for Roots and the Challenges of Relevant Meaning*. Edited by David M. Gordis and Zachary I. Heller, 55-68. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012.

Lessons 3/4: Uprooting, secularization, nationalism and the male privilege of uprooting oneself

Baron, Devorah. *The Thorny Path and Other Stories*. Translated by Joseph Shachter. Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1969.

Berdichevsky, M.Y. *Miriam & Other Stories*. Edited and with an introduction by Avner Holtzman. New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2004.

Indurski, Yehonatan, and Elon, Ori. *Shtisel*. Israel, 2013 (TV Series).

Jelen, Sheila E. "All Writers are Jews, all Jews are Men: Dvora Baron and the Literature of 'the Uprooted'." In *Hebrew, Gender, and Modernity*, 189-200. University Press of Maryland, 2007.

Lesson 5: The evolution of film in the religious community: first steps

Hefetz, Nava Nosan. *Cohen's Wife*. Israel, Maale School, 2000 (short film).

Jacobson, David, "The Ma'ale School - Catalyst for the Entrance of Religious Zionists into the World of Media Production." *Israel Studies* 9,1 (2004): 31-60.

Shapira, Lazy. *Eicha*. Israel, Ma'ale School, 2001 (film).

### Lessons 6-8: The religious community from the perspective of feminist criticism

El-Or, Tamar. *Next Year I Will Know More: Identity and Literacy Among Young Orthodox Women in Israel*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002.

Irsai, Ronit. "Toward a Gender Critical Approach to the Philosophy of Jewish Law." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, 2 (2010): 55-77.

Ross, Tamar. "Modern Orthodoxy and the Challenge of Feminism." *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 16 (2000): 3-38.

Zuria, Anat. *Mekudeshet*. Israel, 2004 (documentary).

Zuria, Anat. *Tehora*. Israel, 2002 (documentary).

### Lessons 9-11: Homoeroticism in the religious community

English-language scholarship has addressed Judaism and homosexuality, whereas Hebrew scholarship has dealt with homosexuality in the Israeli religious community. (There are differences between these topics, and I am still deliberating on the scholarly reading list for the lesson.)

Ben Baghi, Ariel. *Urim Vetoimim*. Israel, 2011 (television series).

Elbom, Haim. *And Thou Shalt Love*. Israel, 2007 (film).

Shapirah, Eliezer, and Divon, Havah. *Srogim*. Israel, 2008-2012 (television series, three seasons).

## Lessons 12-14: Ethnicity and the religious community

Hasfari, Shmuel, and Hasfari, Hanna Azoulay. *Sh'Chur*. Israel, 1994 (film).

Leon, Nissim, "Ethno-Religious Fundamentalism and Theo-ethnocratic Politics in Israel." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 14, 1 (2014): 20-35.

Leon, Nissim, "The Political Use of the Teshuva Cassette Culture in Israel." *Contemporary Jewry* 31, 2 (2011): 91-106.

Peleg, Yaron. "Marking a New Holy Community: God's Neighbors and the Ascendancy of a New Religious Hegemony in Israel" *Jewish Film & New Media* 1, 1(2013): 64-86

Shenhav, Yehouda. *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. (Chapter 2).

Yaesh, Meny. *Ha-Mashgihim*. Israel, 2012 (film).

## Lessons 15-18

### **Territory**, biblical rights, national home and private home

Bashan, Hadar. *In The Freiman's Kitchen*. Israel, 2007 (film).

Cohen, Eliaz. *Poems*. [My selection]

Dalsheim, Joyce. *Unsettling Gaza: Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Don-Yehiya, Eliezer, "Messianism and Politics: the Ideological Transformation of Religious Zionism." *Israel Studies* 19, 2 (2014): 239-263.

Hazani, Menorah, *The Skies are Closer in Homesh*. Israel, 2004 (film).

Hazani, Menorah, *Hitnaari*. Israel, 2007 (film).

*Israel Affairs*, Special Issue: "Judea and Samaria's Jewish Settlers and Settlements – Cultural Sociology of Unsettled Space: A Look From Within."

Nissim, Leon. "Self-Segregation of the Vanguard: Judea and Samaria in the Religious-

Zionist Society." *Israel Affairs* 21, 3 (2015): 348-360.

Orkibia, Eithan. "Judea and Samaria in Israeli Documentary Cinema: Displacement, Oriental Space and the Cultural Construction of Colonized Landscapes." *Israel Affairs* 21, 3 (2015): 408-421.

Newman, David. "Gush Emunim and the Settler Movement." In *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, edited by Joel Peters and David Newman, 256-266. London & New York: Routledge, 2013.

Shenhav, Yehouda. *Beyond the Two States Solution: A Jewish Political Essay*. London: Polity Press, 2012. [An earlier version was published in Hebrew: Am-Oved Press, 2010].

Shenker, Yael. "On the Necessity of Wilderness." *Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies*. University of Michigan, 2008. (essay).

Shenker, Yael. "Challenging the National Space: Jewish and Palestinian Settlements in Literature and Film by Religious-Zionist Israelis" (in progress).

#### Lessons 19-20/: National religious masculinity

Raewyn Connell, **Masculinities**, Allen & Unwin, 1995

Ben Baghi, Ariel. *Urim Vetoimim*. Israel, 2011 (television series).

Joseph Cedar. *Ha-Hesder*. Israel, 2000 (film).

Shenker, Yael. "Reading 'The Time of Trimming' Under the Desk of Religious Zionism: Haim Be'er and National-Religious identity." *Zutot 11* (2014): 6-17.

Shenker, Yael. "A Room of His Own: On Men and Masculinities in Television Series About the Religious Community in Israel" (in the process of publication).

#### Lessons 21-23: Ultra-Orthodox femininity and masculinity

El-Or, Tamar. *Educated and Ignorant: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women and their World*.

Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994.

Hakak, Yohai. "Haredi Male Bodies in the Public Sphere: Negotiating with the Religious Text and Secular Israeli Men." *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spiritualities* 3, 2 (2009): 100-122.

Hakak, Yohai. "Youthful Bodies Rebel: Young Men in Current Israeli Haredi Yeshivas." *Young*, 17, 3 (2009): 221-240.

Hakak, Yohai. *Young Men in Israeli Haredi Yeshiva Education: the Scholars' Enclave in Unrest*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012.

Indurski, Yehonatan. *Zman Ponevezh*. Israel, 2014 (documentary).

Indurski, Yehonatan, and Elon, Ori. *Shtisel*. Israel, 2013 (television series).

Roth, Menachem. *Pursued*. Israel, 2012 (documentary).

Shenker, Yael, "Choosing One's Life: Identity-Swapping Plots in Popular Fiction by Israeli Haredi Women" (under review).

Rama Burshtein, **Fill the Void**, Israel 2012 (film)

Gidi Dar, *Ha-Ushpizin* 2004 (film)

## Lesson 24

### Conclusion: religious identities in Israel

Fischer, Shlomo. "Fundamentalist or Romantic Nationalist? Israeli Modern Orthodoxy, Dynamic Belonging." In *Contemporary Jewish Collective Identities*, edited by Harvey E. Goldberg, Steven M. Cohen and Ezra Kopelowitz, 91-111. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012 .

Fischer, Shlomo. "Radical Religious Zionism: from the Collective to the Individual." In *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*, edited by Boaz Huss, 285-309. Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2011.